

ASSESSING THE EFFECT OF RANDOMIZATION IN A SPREADSHEET-BASED ACTIVE LEARNING EXERCISE FOR THE CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

This exercise borrows from the in-basket and survival game pedagogies to create a list of activities faced by a store manager at the beginning of a hypothetical day. The article describes how the use of input from industry experts facilitates an active-learning environment that challenges students to make decisions based on real-world circumstances. The results of two separate administrations of the assignment demonstrate that instantaneous and random changes to the hypothetical day increase student interest and satisfaction with the assignment when compared to students that only considered one set of hypothetical situations. The article concludes with a discussion of the overall positive impact of the assignment and its ability for adaptability to other courses.

Keywords: randomization, active learning, survival games, in-baskets, student satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

A focal point of this assignment is to promote active learning that allows students to reach a strong conclusion through higher order thinking. As Weldy and Turnipseed (2010) point out, many educators are revitalizing their coursework to incorporate more active learning techniques so that assessment challenges can be met for the accreditation standards set forth by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Additionally, it continues to be demonstrated that students benefit greatly from real-world knowledge (e.g., Sweeney et al. 2009). Finally, it has been documented that creative applications of random outcomes, such as using a random number generator to choose students for class participation, engage students in the classroom (Keeling 2007). Therefore, the challenge was to create an assignment that had elements of active learning, real-world application, and randomized job-related situations that impact a retail store manager's typical or not so typical day.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Active Learning

Bonwell and Eison (1991) define active learning as an instructional method that engages students in the learning process. Additionally, active learning has been praised as an effective means to reach the Millennial generation who have grown up in an interactive world including the internet and video games (Howe and Strauss

2000). In a classic educational work, Bloom (1956) defined and categorized six levels of cognitively related teaching objectives. Bloom's learning hierarchy is as follows:

1. Knowledge: lowest-level category, involves the remembering or recall of specifics.
2. Comprehension: a low level of understanding, including acts of translating, interpreting, and exploration.
3. Application: the use of abstractions to perform in a new situation.
4. Analysis: breaking down the elements of a situation and the rankings or relations among the elements.
5. Synthesis: combining elements to constitute a new pattern or structure.
6. Evaluation: using a set of criteria or standards as a basis for making judgments about an issue.

The assignment described in this article asks students to consider twelve possible situations that a manager of a retail store may encounter on any given day. The assignment initially reaches the analysis stage by requiring students to individually rank the order in which the tasks should be completed by the manager. Subsequently, students form groups and must agree on a single group recommendation for ordering the tasks. This portion of the assignment elevates the assignment to the synthesis stage by introducing an intra-group negotiation session that is designed to reach the most optimal group recommendation based on each of the students' individual arguments.

In-Baskets

An in-basket once referred to the “in and out” baskets that were found on managers’ desks. The manager would come to work in the morning to find several situations that must be dealt with during the day and determine how and in what order the situations should be handled. Current students relate much better to the “inbox” for their e-mail, although the concept remains identical.

In-basket exercises have been used successfully by practitioners in determining the quality of a job applicant by having prospective employees complete a scenario that requires them to prioritize job-related tasks. In-baskets have also been effectively utilized in determining the effect that work related stress has on task performance (Jimmieson and Terry 1997). These activities have typically been acknowledged as having strong managerial implications due to the fact that in-basket exercises require that the respondent prioritize time and resources based on the scenario they are given (Spinrad 1989). Further, in-basket exercises have also been shown to create a strong active learning component in the classroom and to help students gauge how varying priorities guide ranking and handling of in-basket tasks (Joireman et al. 2006). Additionally, Pearson, Barnes, and Onken (2006) have constructed a computerized in-basket for the classroom that produced improved assessment scores over a non-computerized version.

Survival Games

The addition of an “expert” (a high-level company official) to the discussion of this exercise can provide additional valuable insights into the firm’s priorities and culture, as well as additional tactics for handling each situation (Schippman, Prien, and Katz 1990; Randall, Cooke, and Smith 1985). This ties into an active learning technique that is sometimes called a “survival game” pedagogy. Survival games are normally set up with a group of individuals stranded in a non-familiar environment such as the desert, the subarctic, or the moon (Pearson and Stoops 1992). Each individual in the group is given a list of salvaged items and asked to rank these items in importance to the survival of the group. Once individual rankings are recorded, these rankings are debated within a group to determine a group ranking. This group ranking is then compared with an “expert” ranking of individuals that actually lived through such an experience.

Randomization

The concept of randomization has garnered some recent discussion in the education literature for its ability to resonate with the current generation of students. For instance, Keeling (2007) discusses teaching the concept of randomly generated numbers and notes that 100% of her students reacted positively to her in-class demonstra-

tion of the random play feature of an iPod. In her demonstration, fourteen songs were randomly selected to be included on a playlist from ten albums for each of seven hypothetical days. It was shown that over the course of the week that the total percent of time an album was played varied from 4% to 14%. These results were obtained despite each album having an equal amount of time and songs. The non-uniform results of the iPod random play selection resulted in an ideal opportunity to discuss the concept that random results do not necessarily mean average results. Similarly, the set of circumstances facing a store manager on any given day differs based on the variety of variables encountered. These include the unique nature of customer interactions, administrative duties, transactions with suppliers, and miscellaneous events. As a result, an ability to randomly determine a set of events that are encountered by the manager should be positively viewed by students as it introduces a selection procedure that accounts for the notion that the job of a store manager differs greatly from one day to the next.

OBJECTIVES OF THE EXERCISE

Our objective is to create an active learning exercise that simulates the role of a retail store manager in order for students to:

1. Recognize the range of responsibilities for the store manager.
2. Be able to better prioritize the tasks of a store manager.
3. Better recognize the importance of timing in decision-making.
4. Better recognize the importance of planning and organizing long-term activities.
5. Better understand the “typical day” of the store manager.
6. Better understand the strategic and tactical decisions that a store manager must make.
7. Have a positive learning experience from this activity.
8. View this as an enjoyable classroom activity.

Structure of the Exercise

This section describes the steps required to complete this assignment that begins with making contact with industry experts to determine the composition of a typical day. The assignment culminates in a comparison of student recommendations to industry experts in how to best handle the spectrum of situations that face the manager on a hypothetical day.

Step 1 – Gathering Store Manager Input

Working directly with the managers of three independent and small chain record stores, a list of twelve primary categories that impact store managers on a regu-

lar basis was developed. Next, three sample statements for each category were created which represented possible situations that a manager could face over the course of a day. Additionally, the store managers provided estimates of the amount of time required to complete each task, their recommendations for the order in which these tasks should be undertaken, a rating of the importance of each situation as it relates to the store, and a rating of the long-term/short-term impact on the business for each of the situations. Appendix 1 illustrates the full list of the 36 situations arranged in each of twelve categories.

Step 2 – Create Student Handout.

Using random selection, one of three possible situations in each of the twelve categories identified in Step 1 was selected for inclusion on the student handout. Also included on the student handout is the relevant background information on the activity and realistic resources the manager has at his or her disposal for the hypothetical day. Appendix 2 contains the full student handout.

Step 3 – Individual Student Work

Students individually rank the situations facing the store manager in the order they would complete the tasks.

Step 4 – Group Rankings

Next, students are assigned to groups where they discuss their individual rankings to determine a group ranking of the order in which the tasks should be completed by the manager. This phase of the assignment allows students to defend their individual ranking while listening to rationale for alternative rankings.

Step 5 – Computerized Master Spreadsheet

Each group then enters its ranking in the “Group Rank” columns of the master spreadsheet on the instructor’s computer (see Table 1). Prior to showing the groups’ rankings, the instructor leads the discussion by asking groups which situation they would handle first and why. Other groups either agree or disagree but all are required to defend their decisions. This discussion continues through all twelve situations.

Step 6 – Group Rankings vs. Store Manager Rankings

After discussion, the rankings of each group are compared to the summary ranking provided by actual store managers. The spreadsheet then calculates and totals the absolute difference between each student group set of

TABLE 1 SPREADSHEET FEEDBACK TABLE STUDENT GROUP VS. STORE MANAGER RANKINGS									
Situation	Store Mgr. Rank	Group One Rank	Group 1 Absolute Diff.	Group Two Rank	Group 2 Absolute Diff.	Group Three Rank	Group 3 Absolute Diff.	Group Four Rank	Group 4 Absolute Diff.
Overdue Ads	4	1	3	12	8	2	2	1	3
Pop Star	5	2	3	11	6	4	1	3	2
Merchandising	3	3	0	10	7	6	3	5	2
Clothing	12	4	8	9	3	8	4	7	5
Mouse	8	5	3	8	0	10	2	9	1
Health Care	11	6	5	7	4	12	1	11	0
Annual Evals	6	7	1	6	0	1	5	2	4
Loss Control	9	8	1	5	4	3	6	4	5
Price Match	1	9	8	4	3	5	4	6	5
CBD Music	10	10	0	3	7	7	3	8	2
Filming	7	11	4	2	5	9	2	10	3
Nat'l Chain	2	12	10	1	1	11	9	12	10
Total Absolute Difference			46		48		42		42
Note: Student group with the lowest absolute difference is the closest to the store managers’ ranking and is declared the winner.									

rankings and the ranking of the store managers. This is the survival game component of the exercise in which a winner is declared by having the lowest absolute difference between their score and that of the experts (i.e., the store managers). This competitive phase of the assignment is well-received by students as they enjoy seeing how well they did against the store managers. It also opens a discussion for attempting to understand why the managers chose to rank the tasks in their chosen order. It further fuels a debate as to whether the managers were right or if they may have not considered issues that the students, in fact, did consider in their rankings.

Step 7 – Group Rankings vs. Additional Expert Input

The store managers also provided input on how important each situation was to their company, the long-term/short-term nature of each situation, and their estimate of how long each situation would take to handle as shown in Appendix 1.

The additional store manager input assists in four additional learning areas. First, students see the importance of addressing important situations early in the day. Second, they understand the ramifications that any given decision may have on the overall future of the store. Third,

the spreadsheet provides an easy to read format of the relative importance and long-term nature of each of the twelve situations according to actual managers. Finally, students are interested to see the time that managers believe that each situation would require in order to have it properly handled. As can be seen in Table 2, the spreadsheet tallies all twelve time estimates and divides the total by 480 minutes which represents an eight-hour work day. The 570 minutes required in this example is calculated at 19% more difficult than an eight-hour day.

Step 8 – Randomization

This project was designed to build an active learning exercise that simulated a “typical day” of a store manager and accomplished the stated learning objectives. As eluded to earlier in the article a randomized component to an assignment can be very effective at reaching the current generation of students (Keeling 2007). The built-in random feature to this assignment lies in the random selection of one of three potential situations a manager may face in a given day in each of the twelve categories. By utilizing the VLOOKUP and RAND functions on *Microsoft Excel* in the creation of the spreadsheet, the instructor can instantaneously update the spreadsheet while in the

TABLE 2 SPREADSHEET FEEDBACK TABLE STORE MANAGER RATINGS OF IMPORTANCE, LONG-TERM/SHORT-TERM IMPACT AND TIME ESTIMATES			
Situation	Store Manager Importance Rating¹	Store Manager Long-Term/Short-Term Rating²	Store Manager Time Estimates³
Overdue Ads	2	1	30
Pop Star	4	4	30
Merchandising	2	2	15
Clothing	3	4	60
Mouse	1	1	15
Health Care	4	4	45
Annual Evals	3	2	60
Loss Control	5	4	120
Price Match	1	1	15
CBD Music	3	3	120
Filming	2	1	30
Nat'l Chain	5	4	30
Total minutes of manager time for day			570
Difficulty of Day			119%
¹ Importance ratings of completing each task (1 = Not very important; 5 = Very important) ² Long-Term/Short-Term impact on the business (1 = Short term; 5 = Long term) ³ Time estimates are in minutes to complete each activity			

classroom to include newly chosen situations in each of the twelve categories. Table 2 is also immediately updated to show new importance and long-term/short-term ratings. Additionally, the total time estimate and “difficulty of day” of the new situation is displayed. Beyond asking students how they would handle the new set of circumstances, these numbers present an additional teaching situation because many of the random days exceed an eight-hour day. This demonstrates to students that a strong work ethic is needed to accomplish all the tasks that a store manager may be confronted with on a daily basis.

Assessment of Learning Objectives

As shown in Table 3, a questionnaire based upon the objectives of the assignment was developed to indirectly assess student learning from this exercise. The potential positive impact of the inclusion of additional iterations of the exercise, made possible through instantaneous randomized updates of situations facing the manager (step 8), was also measured. In order to properly measure this impact multiple class sections participated in a version of the assignment that was not computer based and had no randomized updates available. Alternatively, other class sections participated in the full version of the assignment described in this article. In other words, the “Fixed” version of the assignment is represented by the first seven steps of the exercise. Students participating in the “Random” version of the exercise completed all eight steps of the assignment. Undergraduate retailing classes and graduate level marketing management classes were used for both Random and Fixed administrations of the exercise.

As Table 3 illustrates, in both the Fixed and Random administrations of the assignment, the students conferred strong ratings on the assignment in each of the eight learning objectives. Nevertheless, the results illustrate that the random-generated exercise showed statistically higher student assessment scores for four of the eight learning objectives indicating that repetition and additional feedback may enhance student learning.

Specifically, there was a significant difference in the student assessment of the exercise in the rating given to the measure of recognizing the importance of planning and organizing the long-term activities of the store managers. Results indicate a significant preference for randomization ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .69$) over fixed situation ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .80$), $t(78) = 2.33$, $p = .03$. Additionally, students reported moderately significant differences in how much the exercise helped them to understand the strategic and tactical decisions that a store manager must make. Again, results indicated a preference for randomization ($M = 4.23$, $SD = .72$) over fixed situation ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .67$), $t(78) = 1.83$, $p = .07$.

Finally, the students that participated in the randomly generated setting as opposed to the fixed situation setting

believed that the overall exercise was more effective on two important metrics. First, there was a moderate statistically significant difference in favor of randomization ($M = 4.48$, $SD = .57$) over fixed situation ($M = 4.18$, $SD = .81$), $t(78) = 1.81$, $p = .08$ in rating the exercise as a good learning activity. Second, there was a significant difference in favor of randomization ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .51$) over fixed situation ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .81$), $t(78) = 2.35$, $p = .02$ in the students’ evaluation of the exercise being an enjoyable classroom activity.

It is important to note that the survey administered to students gauges the students’ belief of whether or not the learning objectives were met. This approach was chosen because of the importance students place on their own perception of the curriculum which has been shown to have a strong impact on the corresponding level of learning attained by the student. Numerous research agendas have determined that the instructional approach utilized in the classroom impacts student satisfaction with course content and that higher satisfaction levels lead to increased learning (e.g., Eastman, Iyer, and Eastman 2011; Fawcett and Fawcett 2011; Leong 2005). Nevertheless, other instructors using this assignment could consider assessing student knowledge of the concepts covered by the assignment through a pre and post test. For instance, students could be given a pre-test at the beginning of the semester that gauged their knowledge of the responsibilities of a retail manager. This could subsequently be compared to a post-test of their knowledge of retail management after completion of the assignment.

OVERALL IMPACT OF THE ASSIGNMENT

There are four key aspects that can be identified which demonstrate the positive impact of this assignment. First, this exercise begins as an individual task at the Analysis Stage of Bloom’s Taxonomy and is elevated to the Synthesis Stage through intra-group negotiations designed to a result in the strongest group recommendation. An additional benefit of this approach is that the likelihood of all students being participative group members increases by allowing students to individually consider the circumstances facing the store manager prior to group discussion.

Second, the assignment simulates real-world scenarios by incorporating the input of store managers. Although students do not always agree with the rank ordering of tasks by the managers or with the time required to complete each task, it is evident through class interaction that the managers’ collective input and expertise is valued by the students. In fact, when the store managers’ rankings are revealed, the intensity of debate can quickly rise as students defend their rankings and learn from the point of view of other students and the managers’ rankings.

Third, this assignment illustrated the added benefit that can be achieved through adding additional iterations of the exercise. Pearson, Barnes and Onken (2006) created

TABLE 3
INDIRECT STUDENT ASSESSMENT OF FIXED SITUATION VS.
RANDOM-GENERATED EXERCISE

Directions: Please circle the response that best describes your evaluation of this exercise. (5 = Strongly Agree to 1 = Strongly Disagree)

	Fixed- Situation Spreadsheet <u>Exercise</u>	Random- Generated Spreadsheet <u>Exercise</u>	t-test <u>prob.=</u>
Students Responding	(49)	(31)	
1. The exercise helped me recognize the store manager's range of responsibilities.	4.24	4.42	0.26
2. The exercise helped me to better prioritize tasks.	4.02	3.90	0.43
3. The exercise helped me to better recognize the importance of timing in decision-making.	4.06	3.90	0.28
4. The exercise helped me to recognize the importance of planning and organizing the long-term activities for the store manager.	3.90	4.29	0.03**
5. The exercise helped me to better understand the "typical day" of the store manager.	3.78	4.03	0.22
6. The exercise helped me to understand the strategic and tactical decisions that a store manager must make.	3.94	4.23	0.07*
7. Overall, I would rate the exercise as a good learning activity.	4.18	4.48	0.08*
8. Overall, I would rate the exercise as an enjoyable classroom activity.	4.17	4.55	0.02**
* Significant difference at 0.10 between fixed situation and random generated computer classes for ratings on this objective.			
** Significant difference at 0.05 between fixed situation and random generated computer classes for ratings on this objective.			

a computerized in-basket for use in the sales management classroom. Their exercise showcased the benefits of an ability to handle more inputs for student decision making as well as quicker and better organized feedback for the students. The assignment discussed in the present article added randomization to a computerized in-basket exercise to try to achieve an even higher level of student learning. In addition, the random-generation of situations forces the students to experience a wider variety of scenarios than an exercise without randomization and allows them to see the

fluid nature of business. As the results demonstrate, in four of eight learning objectives, students rated the random version with additional iterations more favorable than the fixed version.

Fourth, this assignment is highly customizable. Experts in any industry can be readily identified and the categories and scenarios can be modified to meet the needs of the individual instructional goals. As a result, customized versions of this assignment can be utilized across a broad array of classes at the undergraduate and

graduate level. Importantly, this customizability is not limited to context. Issues of depth and breadth can also be considered where instructors can choose to cover a wide

array of circumstances or target a narrow scope of issues, such as supply chain management situations, for a more detailed analysis.

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APPENDIX 1 LIST OF SITUATIONS AVAILABLE FOR RANDOM SELECTION WITH ADDITIONAL STORE MANAGER INPUT

Categories and Situations (Randomly select one situation for each of twelve categories)	Managers' Input			
	Rank ¹	Importance ²	LR/SR ³	Time ⁴
<i>Category 1: Promotions – Weekly Activities</i>				
<Store Signage> There is an ad today for 20% off on selected merchandise. Check signs, floor set up and sale prices.	1	2	1	20

APPENDIX 1 (CONTINUED)
LIST OF SITUATIONS AVAILABLE FOR RANDOM SELECTION WITH
ADDITIONAL STORE MANAGER INPUT

Categories and Situations (Randomly select one situation for each of twelve categories)	Managers' Input			
	Rank ¹	Importance ²	LR/SR ³	Time ⁴
<Overdue Ads> Three-day ad results are overdue from last Thursday's ad.	16	2	1	30
<Music Festival Ad> You have an ad, with picture and copy, to proof and approve by noon today. The ad will run in three weeks on a featured item which you need to restock to be ready. The ad will appear in the program of a downtown music festival and, separately, in an ad for your store.	8	2	1	30
<i>Category 2: Long Range Promotional Planning</i>				
<Pubs Crawl> You will likely need corporate approval to participate in a series of in town pub crawls that you have been invited to co-sponsor. You would like to co-sponsor the crawls, but expect resistance from corporate. The questions are; how should the proposal be presented to corporate, what should be included, and when should this be presented?	34	3	5	60
<Pop Star> Should you accept the offer made last night by last night by the manager of a very well known local female pop star to put on a live performance in your store two weeks from Saturday? What preparations must be made for such an event?	17	4	4	30
<Music Festival Sponsor> You have an chance to be a major sponsor of the city's summer music festival. This would commit a big part of your promotion budget. This opportunity came up because one of the sponsors unexpectedly dropped out. This decision has to be made by the end of business today, or it will be offered to a competing chain.	10	5	5	60
<i>Category 3: Regular Ordering/Receiving of Merchandise</i>				
<Mdse Dept> Contact the mdse dept. of your record chain by 11:00 a.m. to confirm orders for next week.	14	2	2	15
<CD Pricing> The stock person needs your help. A shipment of a hot selling cd just arrived from the home office pre-priced at \$16.99. The copies of this CD on the shelf were pre-priced at \$14.99.	2	2	1	10
<Poster Displays> You discovered yesterday, shopping the competition, that posters at the record store across the street are priced at \$7.98. You have the same display with posters priced at \$10. The poster company supplying these displays normally works on consignment with the retailer and supplier splitting the \$10 poster price 50/50. What action, if any, will you take?	24	1	1	30

APPENDIX 1 (CONTINUED)
LIST OF SITUATIONS AVAILABLE FOR RANDOM SELECTION WITH
ADDITIONAL STORE MANAGER INPUT

Categories and Situations (Randomly select one situation for each of twelve categories)	Managers' Input			
	Rank ¹	Importance ²	LR/SR ³	Time ⁴
<i>Category 4: Long Range Merchandise Planning</i>				
<Holiday Buying Plan>The vice president of merchandising for your record chain said that she would call at 4:00 pm today to discuss your buying plan for the upcoming holiday season. What preparations do you need make for this phone call.	15	4	4	60
<Clothing Contract>You have an opportunity to sign a year-long contract to carry a line of music related clothing on consignment basis in your store. The clothing carries a 50% markup. You know that you need approval from corporate headquarters in order to enter into this contract. What planning must you do before you contact corporate headquarters and when do you contact headquarters?	32	3	4	60
<Music Apparel Line>The president of a major sales promotion company, in town for a convention, left a phone message that he would like to meet with you today about test marketing an innovative new line of music apparel for young people. He asked that you call him first thing to make an appointment for today.	6	3	4	90
<i>Category 5: Regular Store Operations</i>				
<Juvenile Court>Two days ago, a female teenager was detained and turned over to police. You are scheduled to appear in juvenile court this afternoon at 2:00 to testify against this individual.	13	1	1	120
<A/C System>Your air-conditioning system is only partially cooling the store. The weather forecast through the weekend calls for moderate weather so you can leave the front door open. What should you do?	7	2	2	15
<Mouse>When opening the store today, you saw a small, mouse-like shadow streaking under the counter. What do you do?	25	1	1	15
<i>Category 6: Long Range Store Operations</i>				
<Store Shortages>Your store's shortages are well above the chain's average. The security head of the chain asked you to call today to discuss the areas you expect to address in your annual security plan due next month. What areas should in your outline? When do you call?	11	4	4	30
<Work Schedule>You have to make up the work schedule for next month. This is supposed to be posted by tomorrow morning?	19	3	4	15

APPENDIX 1 (CONTINUED)
LIST OF SITUATIONS AVAILABLE FOR RANDOM SELECTION WITH
ADDITIONAL STORE MANAGER INPUT

Categories and Situations (Randomly select one situation for each of twelve categories)	Managers' Input			
	Rank ¹	Importance ²	LR/SR ³	Time ⁴
<Health Care Plan>You promised to stop by the store next door today to talk with the owner about the new employee health care plan that he has just implemented.	28	4	4	45
<i>Category 7: Routine Personnel Matters</i>				
<Store Manager Meeting>You have a noon meeting scheduled for the other store managers in your metro area. You need to make and e-mail an agenda for the meeting.	3	2	2	20
<Annual Evaluations>Two employees are supposed to have their annual performance evaluations today. What preparation do you need for this meeting?	18	3	2	60
<Employee Theft>You suspect one of the employees scheduled to work today of theft because large inventory shortages have occurred on his shifts. What should you do about this situation?	30	4	2	30
<i>Category 8: Long Range Personnel Development</i>				
<Loss Control Training>Headquarters has asked you to train all area managers and employees on loss control. You must prepare an outline for this training for corporate approval at your "earliest possible convenience." What should be in this outline and when should it be submitted to headquarters?	26	5	4	120
<Store Manager Evaluations>You are to conduct a performance evaluation for the store managers in your metropolitan area. How and when should this be done?	29	5	4	180
<Six Week Training>You have been considering signing up your young assistant store manager for a six-week evening program on leadership sponsored by a local university. Today is the last day to register.	31	4	4	30
<i>Category 9: Routine Communications with Customers</i>				
<Price Matching>Last night's register person left you a note that a customer was very upset because K-Mart was selling a CD for \$4.00 less than your price. The customer wanted to purchase the CD at the K-Mart price in your store. You have only one left in stock. The register person took the customer's name and number, and told her that you would call her in the morning.	5	1	1	15

APPENDIX 1 (CONTINUED)
LIST OF SITUATIONS AVAILABLE FOR RANDOM SELECTION WITH
ADDITIONAL STORE MANAGER INPUT

Categories and Situations (Randomly select one situation for each of twelve categories)	Managers' Input			
	Rank ¹	Importance ²	LR/SR ³	Time ⁴
<Shoplifting>You have a message, left on the answering machine last night, from the parent of a teenage girl arrested for shoplifting in your store. The girl is scheduled to appear in court today. Should you return this call? Should you make any preparations?	4	1	1	15
<Zydeco>A customer in the store asks why you don't carry more zydeco CD's. The truth is that this is not a very big market. The customer is persistent, but you are very busy. How should you handle this customer?	22	1	1	15
<i>Category 10: Community Involvement</i>				
<United Way>You received a call yesterday asking you to head up the city's United Way Campaign starting next month. You have to report back your decision by first thing tomorrow morning. Should you accept this responsibility?	20	4	3	15
<CBD Music Festival>You ran into the mayor last night at a cocktail party. He asked you to serve on a committee to help plan the upcoming CBD Music Festival. The first meeting is today at 5:00pm. Should you commit to being on this committee? Should you attend today's meeting?	27	3	3	120
<40 under 40>You have been nominated as one of the city's "40 people under 40 who make a difference." You need to email a 500 word press release stating your background, activities and accomplishments. That is due by the end of the day.	33	3	1	60
<i>Category 11: Miscellaneous Occurrences - Routing</i>				
<After School Concert>Coming to work this morning, you noticed a crew setting up a sound stage at the end of your block. The workers told you that there will be an after school concert featuring a well-known hip-hop artist. What preparations should you make?	9	5	1	30
<Filming> Coming to work this morning, you noticed signs posted along your street that there will be no parking after 7:00 pm tonight and for the next two days because of the filming of a movie. What preparations must be made for this event?	22	2	1	30
<Flooding>The weather forecast calls for heavy rain tonight. Your street sometimes floods. What should you do?	35	2	2	30

APPENDIX 1 (CONTINUED)
LIST OF SITUATIONS AVAILABLE FOR RANDOM SELECTION WITH
ADDITIONAL STORE MANAGER INPUT

Categories and Situations (Randomly select one situation for each of twelve categories)	Managers' Input			
	Rank ¹	Importance ²	LR/SR ³	Time ⁴
<i>Category 12: Miscellaneous Occurrences – Major</i>				
<National Record Chain>You heard at a cocktail party last night that a national record store chain might be moving into an empty store across the street from your store. What should you do with this information?	12	5	4	30
<Sewer Repairs>You read in the newspaper last night that your street is scheduled for major sewer repairs. The repairs are supposed to start next month. What should you do with this information?	36	5	4	60
<Zoning>The city zoning commission is meeting tonight to consider a new code that would prohibit you from holding live music events in your store. You have to submit your reasons for opposing this ordinance in writing before the commission will allow you to speak.	21	5	5	60
¹ Store managers' ranking of the order in which the tasks should be completed ² Importance ratings of completing each task (1 = Not very important; 5 = Very important) ³ Long-Term/Short-Term impact on the business (1 = Short term; 5 = Long term) ⁴ Time estimates are in minutes to complete each activity				

APPENDIX 2
STUDENT HANDOUT

A “typical” day in the life of a store manager: What would you do?

- ◆ You are manager of a downtown store of a regional record store chain.
- ◆ As downtown manager your responsibilities include coordinating the operations of the five stores in your chain that are located in your metropolitan area.
- ◆ You have one stock person and one register person coming in to work at 9:00 a.m.
- ◆ Your store opens at 9:30 a.m. (Your shopping center branch stores open at 10:00 a.m.)

Directions: It is Friday morning at 8:50 a.m., and the following situations are facing you. Rank these items as to which you would handle 1st, 2nd, 3rd...12th. Be prepared to discuss how you would handle each situation.

Situation	Individual Rank	Group Rank	Manager Rank	Absolute Difference Group and Manager Rank
Three-day ad results are overdue from last week.				
Should you accept the offer made last night by the manager of a very well known local female pop star to put on a live performance in your store two weeks from Saturday? What preparations must be made for such an event?				

APPENDIX 2 (CONTINUED)
STUDENT HANDOUT

Situation	Individual Rank	Group Rank	Manager Rank	Absolute Difference Group and Manager Rank
Contact the merchandising department of your record chain by 11:00 a.m. to confirm orders for next week.				
You have an opportunity to sign a year-long contract to carry a line of music related clothing on consignment basis in your store. The clothing carries a 50% markup. You know that you need approval from corporate headquarters in order to enter into this contract. What planning must you do before you contact corporate headquarters and when do you contact headquarters?				
When opening the store today, you saw a small mouse-like shadow streaking under the counter. What do you do?				
You promised to stop by the store next door today to talk with the owner about the new employee health care plan that he has just implemented.				
Two employees are supposed to have their annual performance evaluations today. What preparation do you need for this meeting?				
Headquarters has asked you to train all area managers and employees on loss control. You must prepare an outline for this training for corporate approval at your "earliest possible convenience." What should be in this outline and when should it be submitted to headquarters?				
Last night's register person left you a note that a customer was very upset because K-Mart was selling a CD for \$4.00 less than your price. The customer wanted to purchase the CD at the K-Mart price at your store. You only have one left in stock. The register person took the customer's name and number and told her that you would call her in the morning.				
You ran into the mayor last night at a cocktail party. He asked you to serve on a committee to help plan the upcoming CBD Music Festival. The first meeting is today at 5:00 pm. Should you commit to being on this committee? Should you attend today's meeting?				
Coming to work this morning, you noticed signs posted along your street that there will be no parking after 7:00 pm tonight and for the next two days because of the filming of a movie. What preparations must be made for this event?				
You heard at a cocktail party last night that a national record chain might be moving into an empty store across the street from your store. What should you do with this information?				